

## IV. On short-hand writing

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inseruerit. Etsi subtilis theoretica thermometri correctionis determinatio non prorsus congruit cum Mayeri hujus rei tractandæ ratione: tamen, si eam recipissent astronomi, maximam partem evitassent errorum, quos gignet refraction, aeris densitati in observatoris loco aut refrangendi facultati tota proportionalis posita."

It now remains that I thank you, sir, for your attention to my communications, and that I express my regret you were troubled with the short letter in your last Number: but I was not then aware that a public man, upon a public question, would descend to personal abuse, even if he found himself without good arguments to urge in his defence.

I am, sir, &c.

Jan. 7, 1822.

JAMES IVORY.

IV. *On Short-hand Writing.* By HENRY UPINGTON, Esq.

*To Dr. Tillock.*

Blair's Hill, Cork, Nov. 5, 1821.

DEAR SIR, — GIVE me leave to occupy your attention for a short time, upon a subject which, although in itself not a branch of philosophy or literature, must, if successfully cultivated, be acknowledged as a valuable acquisition by every one who is desirous of occasionally taking down the heads of a discourse, or who devotes a considerable portion of his life either to the transcribing of the works of others, or to original composition.

You will very easily perceive, sir, by this prefatory observation, that I should willingly realize, as far as in my power, the suggestion of Mr. Locke, by putting every gentleman in possession of the most expeditious method of short-writing compatible with perspicuity and ordinary muscular execution. This is most certainly my intention; and if I should be so fortunate as to enable the literary part of my countrymen to save, in the course of every day, even one or two hours which must otherwise be devoted to manual drudgery, I shall feel myself most amply recompensed.

The prominent objection of the most intelligent persons with whom I have conversed, to the cultivation of short-hand as generally practised, is in my opinion extremely rational. They insist that even *years* are necessary to execute with sufficient ease the various crabbed angles, and consequent difficult combinations dependent upon the four different positions, left, right, perpendicular and horizontal, as thus / \ | —: and that until an absolutely automatical command of these be obtained, even the intellectual Note-taker or Reporter who uses short-hand is

very

very little superior to a mere operating mechanic, for ever attending to his fingers, but incapable of exercising his head, whether for the necessary rejection of tautology or the judicious condensation of the subject.

In confirmation of the justness of this objection I may add, if necessary, my own experience. These five-and-twenty years I have been in the habit of using short-hand for my private purposes: and, although I had very early the good fortune to obtain for myself what practical short-hand writers would call a *superior* method, as embracing the principal conveniences and rejecting the principal inconveniences of the methods of Dr. Byron, Mr. Gurney, Mr. Taylor, and Dr. Mavor, while at the same time it was somewhat swifter than all; yet so opposite are the muscular motions, even on this plan, to those to which I am every day accustomed in common writing, that after a lapse of two or three weeks without using short-hand, I am compelled to re practise it for half an hour at least, in order to attain my previous facility. As to the taking down a public discourse, *verbatim*, I know not what extraordinary application may have accomplished; but in candour I must acknowledge my incapacity. Although a tolerably quick writer, I have never at any time been able to take down in a desirably copious manner, even the substance of a sermon: certain difficult combinations never failed to obtrude themselves—my attention was distracted—and I lost the speaker.

After having thus stated one formidable argument against the study of short-writing by the gentleman who does not mean to use it as a profession—to which argument may be added, the undeniable difficulty of *reading* it; you will naturally be desirous to learn, what method I can propose that shall operate, in any material degree, towards the removal of such rational objections. My intended answer is the result of experience, not of theory; and therefore I shall not hesitate to make it. It is briefly this:

First, That the simplest and most easily executed scheme of *consonants* be contrived—in which scheme, all characters descending in straight lines towards the *right* shall be rejected, unless in the middle or ending of a word when *preceded*, and at all times, even in the beginning of a word, unless *followed* by an ascending stroke, as thus *W* or thus *V*: and by which scheme no definite angle, nor even perpendicular line unless when alone, shall ever be required; while, for perspicuity, all the common stops may without confusion be introduced.

Secondly, That with regard to *vowels*—the MASORETIC method of writing the Hebrew language be almost exactly adopted: by which I mean—that every word shall be expressed by its consonants

sonants alone—the simplest vowel characters devisable being subsequently applied, whether in the beginning, the middle or the end of words, as the writer shall consider them expedient.

Thirdly, As to the *reading* of an extensive manuscript in which these or any other short-hand characters are solely used, with satisfactory readiness, at a glance, when the subject itself is altogether or very nearly forgotten by the writer: although some of our stenographic bookmakers may insist on the facility of so doing, after a few months or even weeks of application; yet I cannot by any means hold out so fallacious an expectation. On the contrary, *years* are indispensable: nor is it likely that any one gentleman in a thousand (I speak not of the professional stenographer) shall ever attain this ultimate object by any other process than that which I have seen successfully adopted;—the intermixing, with his common writing, the pronouns, auxiliary verbs, conjunctions and other minor parts of speech expressed in short-hand; and proceeding from thence, step by step, slowly yet systematically, to encroach upon his long-hand.




















Lastly, With respect to the possibility of ever following a speaker, *verbatim*, by the apparently slow method I have suggested—the sequel shall determine. In the mean time let the literary gentleman reflect, that even if no other object be attainable than that of expressing all our ordinary words in short-hand, with about four times his usual expedition, by which means more than one-third of his whole time shall, in a few weeks, be saved;—let him, I say, reflect, that these few weeks devoted to such an attainment will have been very judiciously employed.

Were I in the least disposed, tediously to engross the pages of your Journal, and consequently to exhaust the patience of its readers, I should enter into a long detail of the *history* of short-writing taken from the voluminous works of our very learned English authors upon this *art*, to which, not satisfied with the generally understood name of *Short hand*, they have assigned the very lofty appellations of brachygraphy, cryptography, stenography, tachygraphy, zeitography, semigraphy, or “the world’s rarity,” with a numerous train of *etceteras* all dignified by the title of “systems:” I should literally *carry* my reader to China; from thence to Egypt, and from Egypt to Greece and Rome—where I should leave him no wiser than I found him, unless it be deemed worthy of our notice that, in addition to the methods of abbreviation practised by the Romans, and of which even Ainsworth’s Dictionary has given us most copious specimens, there were also used by some of their *notarii*, certain arbitrary characters called *notæ* in opposition to *literæ*, by which not only certain terminations but several thousand Latin words were expeditiously expressed.

From

From Rome I should travel to England, and there introduce my reader to the unparalleled Timothy Bright, who lived in the reign of Elizabeth, and who, as we are informed, was the first inventor of a stenographic Alphabet, which he dedicated to that Queen. I should even rally my countrymen upon their various whimsies styled *improvements* of the art; such as the writing of whole sentences without taking off the pen—or the creation of three or even five real or imaginary lines called “places,” which, like our musical stave, shall metamorphose one letter into another at pleasure, or even dispense altogether with certain *commencing* letters, through the agency of the *name* of that place upon which the *second* letter shall be made. Neither should I hesitate to set forth the pedantic introduction, called “Invention,” of a whole host of Latin prepositions, such as *omni*, *post*, and *preter*—ill suited to the genius of our language, and calculated neither for perspicuity, nor, on the great average of syllables, even for brevity itself. I should perhaps also state the various important controversies of our very learned cryptographers—whether, in the writing of any individual *word*, the hand should or should not be ever lifted at all: but as I cannot ensure to myself a patient reading, by the unlearned world, of such enlightened topics, I shall pass on in my own way with the subject, and lay before you what many will consider a very useful though perhaps not a very amusing *Table* of all the short-hand characters deserving the name of *alphabetical*.

TABLE OF ALPHABETICAL SHORT-HAND CHARACTERS, *arranged in the order of Simplicity, i. e. commencing with the most simple and regularly proceeding to the most complex.*

1st. Right lines .. ..				— .. ..	= 5
2d. Curves [any thing approaching semicircles] }				.. ..	= 4
3d. Right lines beginning with a curve or hook }					 = 5
4th. Right lines beginning with a loop }					 = 5
5th. Curves (nearly semicircles) beginning with a loop }				.. ..	= 2
	Reject, as explained below ..				3
	Remain .. ..				18

*Note.*

*Note.* As it may appear rather strange to those who are unacquainted with short-hand, why the two first characters of the first series are apparently similar; it may not be impertinent to observe, that almost all our stenographers have, by a very simple contrivance, rendered them virtually distinct—the one being an ascending stroke and connected with the following letter thus *1*, the other descending and connected thus *7*.

*Note also*, that the first four characters of the third series, as well as the third and fourth characters of the fourth series, are ineligible for *general* purposes. If we add to this the necessity for junction, or at least the extreme convenience of appropriating two *hooked* characters (that is, our choice of either) to an individual letter; and the similar necessity of appropriating two *looped* characters, in like manner, as indicated by the respective *braces* set over those characters in the table—we shall find the number of our truly alphabetical letters reduced to *eighteen*.

Now with regard to the utility of this table, is it not obviously a material guidance for the construction of an alphabet?—and who, without a thorough knowledge of all the existing characters, together with a knowledge of the ease or difficulty of their formation, their comparative swiftness, their eligibility for junction, their distinctness when swiftly written, or their tendency to promote or injure lineality, shall pretend to lay down a rational scheme of short-hand? But even this knowledge is insufficient. The ratio of occurrence of all the *consonants* of the language for which a short-hand alphabet is intended, must be tolerably well ascertained; the incipient ones, or those which first present themselves in every word, as the *n* in *on*, *no*, *never*, being distinguished from the subsequently occurring consonants in every word [I shall call them *subsequents*], as the *v* and *r* in the last-mentioned dissyllable *never*, or the *grd* in the word *regard*. Here I must request of the intelligent reader already conversant in the principles of short-hand, that he will not censure my prolixity. This paper is intended merely for the information of those gentlemen who may wish to obtain a mastery of this art—but whose valuable time may otherwise be sacrificed to the ignorance or cunning of an empiric. Nor is this observation uncalled for: more than one gentleman of my acquaintance has reason to regret his unprofitable labour.

The difficulty, or rather the trouble, of forming such a “ratio of occurrence” as that of which I have just spoken, is indeed so great, that were it not for the indefatigable exertions of a literary friend, I should in all probability have never obtained so valuable a document. Several weeks were devoted by him to the scrutiny. Parliamentary and forensic speeches, sermons, philosophical

lectures, polite literary correspondence—all were separately explored; and an average was taken of the whole.

This very useful table, formed from upwards of one hundred thousand letters, was constituted thus; the highest number, N, being reduced to 1000 as the standard.

*Table of the relative occurrence of the various Consonants [quiescent ones not reckoned] of English classical Composition—whether incipient consonants or subsequents: commencing or incipient y (together with the double letters ch, sh, th, wh, wherever found) being considered among the number of those consonants; and also the treble letter thr, whether a vowel be interposed or not between the h and r. STR was too unimportant to introduce.*

		Alone; or incipient.		Subse- quent.		Totals.	
hard	B	....	154	....	58	....	212
	C	....	..	....	..	....	..
soft	C	....	..	....	..	....	..
	D	....	103	....	359	....	462
	F	....	198	....	85	....	283
	G	....	33	....	114	....	147
	H	....	77	....	..	....	77.
	J	....	5	....	5	....	10
	K	....	119	....	113	....	232
	L	....	77	....	278	....	355
	M	....	130	....	139	....	269
	N	....	361	....	639	....	1000
	P	....	136	....	109	....	245
	Q	....	3	....	9	....	12
	R	....	105	....	574	....	679
	S	....	255	....	507	....	762
	T	....	236	....	581	....	817
	V	....	73	....	81	....	154
	W	....	122	....	7	....	129
	X	....	14	....	13	....	27
	Y	....	52	....	..	....	52
	Z	....	0	....	2	....	2.

expressed by K.  
.. .. S.

Subsequent H, un-  
connected with C,  
S, T or W, is con-  
sidered an *aspirate*.

Almost all occasion-  
ed by the 2d person,  
*you, ye, your*. Inde-  
pendently of these, it  
occurred but thrice.  
This letter Z does  
not occur *once* on  
the present scale,  
as an incipient.

Ch

	Alone; or incipient.			Subse- quent.			Totals.			
Ch	....	2	....	43	....	45.	Ch was represented by K when so sounded, as in "chymist."			
Sh	....	19	....	11	....	30				
Th	....	282	....	32	....	314				
Wh	....	52	....	2	....	54				
Thr	....	28	....	21	....	49				
		<hr/>		<hr/>		<hr/>				
		2636		3782		6418				

ARRANGEMENT in the order of frequency.

N, T, S, R, D, L, Th, F, M, P, K, B, V, G, W, H, Wh, Y, Thr,  
Ch, Sh, X, Q, J, Z.

*Note.* The average number of *words* attachable to the foregoing table; or, in other terms, the average number of words expressed by 6418 short-hand consonants, is 2743, which is almost fractionally equal to  $2\frac{1}{3}$ \* such consonants for every individual word. *Arbitraries*, it is true, may provide for *some* of these; but comparatively for so few that this table must serve, with sufficient accuracy, as the basis of any intended calculation.

Suppose that, for example's sake, I were to start a question, Let the descending oblique right line / be excluded as an *independent* letter; and the writer be privileged to exchange, when desirable, the perpendicular line | for the foregoing oblique one .... thus obviating many difficult angles: What loss, then, shall be sustained by adopting, for the letter L, the looped character *ℓ* in place of the relinquished line /; taking it for granted that looped characters, except in the beginning of words, are nearly equal to simples †;—but that in the beginning of words, or when alone, a loss equal to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  right line is sustained by every looped character?

In my opinion, this question may be solved by the judicious application of our table, thus:

Let the aggregate of our consonants, 6418, be rated on the average, as equal to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  right line each [near enough for our

\* This average does not hold good with *vulgar* composition, which almost constantly takes but *two* short-hand characters, or thereabout, to every word.

† When the license of turning the loop in the requisite direction is given to the writer—as thus *ℓ* in place of *ℓ*.



purpose]: there shall result from this a } 9327 right lines.  
number equal to . . . . . }

To which add the lines formed *in air*, by } 2742  
lifting the hand between each word . . }

Add also the supposed number of vowels }  
(including A and I when necessary) which } = 350  
cannot, without too much risk of illegibi- }  
lity, be dispensed with . . . . . }

And add likewise; loss by lifting the } 350  
hand *in air* to form those vowels . . }

Total = 13069 right lines,

or, in round numbers, 13,000.

Now, if in writing a number = 13,000 right lines, the letter L, as an *incipient*, shall occur but 77 times, producing a loss = 115 right lines; the aggregated loss is evidently but the 113th part of the whole, or very nearly equal to half a minute in an hour.

Pursuing the same mode of calculation, incipient K, too, if expressed by  $\text{K}$  in place of  $\text{K}$ , will yield a loss of almost exactly one minute in an hour;—and this sacrifice, as well as that arising from the looped L (supposing even the aggregate loss increased by one-half, in consequence of the disadvantage of these characters when intermediate or final), I shall make to a certain extent\* in the formation of my alphabet.

[To be continued.]

\* The plan of *prepositives* which I mean, by and by, to suggest, will almost wholly remove the *incipient* disadvantage.

V. *Ephemeris of the newly-discovered Planets for their several Oppositions in 1822: calculated by S. GROOMBRIDGE, Esq. F.R.S., and presented by him to the Astronomical Society of London.*

PALLAS and CERES being near the aphelion, it is doubtful whether they will be visible at the opposition; particularly the former, by reason of the great excentricity of its orbit. It was therefore unnecessary to compute their places to the stationary points. The orbit of *Vesta* having been found from later observations less than heretofore computed, the mean longitude in the tables of Mr. P. Daussy (published in the *Connaissance des Temps* 1820) has become nearly 20 minutes in arrear.

VESTA.